Chum

EK RISHTA—THE BOND OF FRIENDSHIP

In the beginning, there was the love triangle. Two men fought battles to win the fair maiden's well-manicured hand.

Rewind to the first really big love triangle, Mehboob Khan's *Andaz* (1949): the two heroes weren't even acquaintances. Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor were introduced to each other by the common (rather, not so common) factor, Nargis, in their lives. Then they became the thorns on both sides of the rose.

Fifteen years down the line, Raj Kapoor penned his own version of *Andaz*. In *Sangam* (1964), the bond between the two friends became far more frenzied. The Gopal-Sunder reel model in *Sangam* has persisted over the years. If we have pals singing songs of friendship in the first reel, they're bound to fall out before the intermission... because of the hyphenating houri between them.

Earlier in Guru Dutt's *Chaudhavin Ka Chand* (1960), real-life friends Guru Dutt and Rehman played friends and closet rivals for the beauteous Waheeda Rehman.

Having taken the mickey out of film friendships, *Dil Chahta Hai* reiterates that boys-just-wanna-have-fun

Male friends (or for that matter, female—Shabana Azmi and Rekha—in *Raaste Pyar Ke*—1982) seemed destined to be destroyed by their mutual passion for the same object of adoration.

Even when pals battled to 'sacrifice' their love for each other, the cleft in their companionship deepened to more profound depths than Sharmila Tagore's dimples which, incidentally, she flashed generously at bosom pals-turned-sworn enemies Deven Varma and Dharmendra in *Devar* (1966).

This friendship-on-the-run theme intensified to such an extent that Tina Munim had to tell buddies Rakesh Roshan and Rishi Kapoor in *Aap Ke Deewane* (1980), "Hey guys, what do you want me for? You've got each other."

During the same year as *Sangam*, Satyen Bose had created box office havoc with a refreshingly uncomplicated friendship in *Dosti* (1964). The heartwarming melodrama about the bond between two physically challenged men (Sushil Kumar-Sudhir Kumar) was underscored by some great 'love' songs which one friend sang to the other, like *Mera to jo bhi qadam hai woh teri raah mein hai* and *Chahunga main tujhe saanjh savere.*

Eleven years later there were many surface changes in the way male friendships were depicted. But Jai and Veeru in *Sholay* (1975) were still singing a love ballad in honour of their friendship. Analysts had a field day finding secret signals in the sequence showing Dharmendra balanced on Amitabh Bachchan's shoulder as they sang *Yeh dosti hum nahin todenge.*

The mandatory *dosti* song apart, *Sholay* was the first Hindi film in which friends behaved normally, as opposed to queerly. There were no bouts of embarrassing embraces and awkward weeping. And when Veeru became mawkish, it was strictly under the influence of alcohol or to dramatise his faith in his constant friend.

Twenty-seven years after Javed Akhtar co-wrote *Sholay,* his son Farhan has made the first feature of Hindi cinema where friendship is based entirely on his own experiences instead of fiction. Farhan admits he has used several of his experiences with his friends. Like Sid, Akash and Sameer in *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001), he and his friends would often take off to Goa.

Having taken the mickey out of film friendships, *Dil Chahta Hai* reiterates that boys-just-wanna-have-fun, an attitude that has been a staple in Hollywood (check out films like *Real-*

Three to tango: **Sangam**

Yeh dosti: **Sholay**

ity Bites and *Dumb & Dumber)* but seemed to elude the creative grasp of Hindi screenwriters... except in rare cases like Shekhar Kapur's *Masoom* (1983) in which the friendship between Naseeruddin Shah and Saeed Jaffrey rang true. Or there was Sai Paranjpye's *Chashme Buddoor* (1981) in which Farouque Shaikh-Ravi Baswani-Rakesh Bedi whooped it up as a trio of unalike buddies.

Earlier, male bonding in our movies appeared to be rather overdone and artificial. Whether it was Amitabh Bachchan-Shatrughan Sinha in Raj Khosla's *Dostana* (1980) or Dharmendra-Shatrughan Sinha in Dulal Guha's *Dost* (1974), the friendship band seemed to be clamped around the protagonists' necks, choking the hell out of them. Or take the sacrificial routine of Lawrence D'Souza's triangular romance *Saajan* (1991), in which Madhuri Dixit carromed between Sanjay Dutt and Salman Khan.

Two naturally toned friendships that come to mind are the ones that Dharmendra-Sanjeev Kumar and Rajesh Khanna-Amitabh Bachchan shared in Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Satyakam* (1969) and *Anand* (1970), respectively. The Anand-Babu Moshai friendship has become legendary. Its genuine warmth is attributable to the fact that Hrishi*da* based this friendship on his own feelings for Raj Kapoor.

A few years later, Hrishi*da* did a *desi Becket* and cast the *Anand* pals in *Namak Haraam* (1973), as a capitalist and union leader sharing an uneasy but intense relationship. Perhaps unintentionally, the film showed the friends as being unnaturally possessive about each other. *Namak Haraam* was the first mainstream Hindi film that dared to suggest a perceptibly grey area among friends. All the rest of the weeping, hugging and declarations of *janam janam ka saath* made by celluloid friends were supposed to be no more than asexual affection.

Teen spirit: **Chashme Buddoor**

Even when Amitabh Bachchan and Shashi Kapoor were shown bathing naked together in *Silsila* (1981) (with a terribly ribald joke about one of them bending down to retrieve soap), they were just being silly boys. That's all.

Speaking of silly boys, male bonding couldn't get any more whacked-out than it did in Basu Chatterjee's *Shaukeen* (1982). In this comedy, Ashok Kumar, Utpal Dutt and A.K Hangal ogled so hard at Rati Agnihotri that we feared for their cataracts.

Now when we see Aamir Khan, Saif Ali Khan and Akshaye Khanna having pure chummy fun in *Dil Chahta Hai,* we are reminded not much of Jai and Veeru in *Sholay* as the three old pals in *Shaukeen.*

Even in Anurag Kashyap's *Paanch,* the way the four layabouts played by Kay Kay Menon, Vijay Mourya, Aditya Shrivastava and Joy Fernandes share their given space, shows a rigorous regard for getting male friendship right. Finally.

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